Consumer Labeling Initiative

Read The Label FIRST!

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Philadelphia Flower Show March 6, 2000

Good Morning!

Thank you very much, Brad for that gracious introduction. I am delighted to be here at the Philadelphia Flower Show. As an avid gardener, this show is an incredible experience in itself.

But also, I have the opportunity in this beautiful setting to announce the launch of the Consumer Labeling Initiative's "Read the Label *FIRST!*" consumer education campaign.

I welcome all of you from the media to this event – I'm so glad you could be here this morning. We're also pleased that many of our partners are here to show you the kinds of changes they're making in their product labels.

I'm thrilled to publicly introduce our new logo:

"Read the Label FIRST!"

Today kicks off the campaign to draw attention to the improved product labels on the shelves. And reading the labels will help consumers make smarter, safer choices for their family, for their environment, and for their safety.

BACKGROUND

By way of a brief history, EPA began the Consumer Labeling Initiative in March of 1996 as part of Vice President Gore's commitment to reinvent government.

It's a voluntary, cooperative partnership with industry, other government agencies, and public interest groups. We're getting better results for consumers without burdensome regulation. Companies are voluntarily changing their product labels, and we appreciate their work.

Companies who have changed their labels represent <u>over 90% of the market share</u> for indoor insecticides, outdoor pesticides, and hard surface household cleaners.

RESEARCH

And we have done our homework. These new, improved labels are based on extensive, peer-reviewed research with real, live consumers. We wanted to better understand how people use labels and what information they want and need from them.

LABEL CHANGES

We listened to what consumers told us. Based upon what we found out, EPA recommended changes that would make labels easier to read, understand, and use.

These changes in turn will help people:

- protect their children, their pets, and the environment by using and handling products safely;
- save money by buying the right products and using the proper amount for the job; and,
- get the results they expect in their homes and gardens.

New labels are appearing on the store shelves now. But simply improving the labels is not enough – consumers must read the new labels.

CONSUMER EDUCATION

So today we're launching "Read the Label *FIRST!*" – a nationwide consumer education and label awareness effort.

The Philadelphia Flower Show, which coincides with the Spring arrival of products on store shelves with new, improved, consumer-friendly labels, is the perfect opportunity to begin the educational campaign.

The message is very simple: Read the Label FIRST!

- We believe that information empowers consumers to make smarter choices.
- Consumers who follow our encouragement to "Read the Label FIRST!" will find better, clearer labels -- enabling consumers to make the right choices when they buy and use these products.
- And again, they will protect their children, pets, and help the environment.

We're hoping that the new logo will show up EVERYWHERE. Where people shop, meet, or get their information -- to newspapers, to magazines, to stores, to subway stops. We'll distribute our educational materials to variety of locations, including garden centers, hardware and pet stores, and veterinary clinics.

In your press kits, you'll find some of our "Read the Label FIRST!" brochures. The themes are:

- "Protect Your Kids"
- "Protect Your Garden"
- "Protect Your Pets" and,
- "Protect Your Household."

These brochures contain practical consumer tips on how to use these products better.

At the EPA Exhibit here at the Show, As you can see, we have lots of information displaying our logo: "Read the Label *FIRST!*"

Labels are now better, and the next step is to encourage consumers to read them. We believe an informed consumer -- is a responsible consumer -- for their family, for their environment, and for their safety.

Once again, I thank you for coming and for your interest. Please remember: "Read the Label *FIRST!*"

Now, I'd like to turn it back over to Brad, to introduce our partners to speak about the project and specific examples that highlight the improvements for consumers.